wife of Okumura, Toyosuke

Project I.D. No. 54

NAME: Okumura, Hideyo DATE OF BIRTH: 1891 PLACE OF BIRTH: Hiroshima
Age: ___ Sex: F Marital Status: M Education: _____

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1916 Age: ___ M.S. M Port of entry: Honolulu
Occupation/s: 1. Housewife 2. _____ 3. _____
Place of residence: 1. Hawaii 2. Sacramento 3. Lodi
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Community organizations/activities: _____

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Wallaga
Name of relocation center: Amache, Colorado
Dispensation of property: An American kept it. Names of bank/s: _____
Jobs held in camp: 1. _____ 2. _____
Jobs held outside of camp: _____
Left camp to go to: Chicago

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: 1948
Address/es: 1. ~~Sacramento~~ 2. _____
3. _____
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Activities: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death: _____

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 2/4/74 Place: Sacramento

Translator: Unlisted

OKUMURA, MRS HIDEYO

Q: Where is your birthplace?

A: It is Hiroshima.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in February 1887. My wife was born in Feb., 1891.

Q: How old are you now?

A: I am only 87 years old.

Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Toyosuke Okumura.

Q: What about your's, Mrs. Okumura?

A: My name is Hideyo Okumura.

Q: Where were you born Mrs. Okumura?

A: I was born in Miho, Hiroshima.

Q: When did you leave Japan, Mr. Okumura?

A: I left Japan in 1912 and came here.

Q: Did you come to America to work?

A: Of course. I didn't come here to gamble.

Q: Did you come alone?

A: Yes, I came here alone at first.

Q: Did you have friends over here?

A: No, nobody special although there were many people here from my native village. When I came here I didn't have any friends. I went to Hawaii and stayed there for 12 years. Then I came here.

Q: Did you come to America in 1924, then?

A: Yes, I did. It was at the height of exclusion. I was doing business then.

Q: What kind of business were you in?

A: I was in grocery business.

Q: When did you come here Mrs. Okumura?

A: I came here about 4 years after my husband did.

Q: Were you married before you came here?

A: We were married and had a child. I brought him with me.

Q: How was the life in Hawaii?

A: I managed a store at first, Then I worked as a teacher of the Japanese Language School before I came here.

Q: What kind of work did you do after you came here?

A: I could not find a job so I packed fruits.

Q: Where did you work at?

A: In Sacramento. We lived in Sacramento for over 30 years.

Q: Did you start a business here?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: What kind of business?

A: I was in restaurant business for 4 to 5 years. After I quit the business I packed pears.

Mrs. O.: He hired people and grew grape, also. He did all kinds of work

Q: What do you remember well about the time you first came here?

A: I had a contract of growing grape hiring 30 to 40 Japanese.

Q: What were the hardest things?

A: I didn't experience any hardships.

Q: Were you ever in trouble?

A: No, I only missed my wife. After my wife joined me she cooked with one helper.

Q: Were you a contractor?

A: Yes, I was. I had a contract with a company.

Q: Was that in Sacramento?

A: No, it was in Lodi.

Q: Did you hire about 30 people?

A: I had 30 to 40 helpers.

Q: What kind of employees did you have? Were they Japanese or Mexicans?

A: They were Japanese.

Q: They were Isseis, weren't they?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Were those Isseis single or married?

A: There were some who were married and some were single.

Q: Did you own a camp?

A: Yes, I did.

Mrs. O: I cooked and sometimes I went out to pick.

Q: Wasn't it hard to cook for about 30 people?

A: Yes, it was.

Q: About what time did you get up?

A: They went out to work by 7 a.m. so I got up about an hour earlier.

Q: Did you cook 3 meals a day?

A: Yes, I did. I also prepared Japanese style bath. I had a hard time.

Q: What was hard for you?

A: As we had hired people there were some trouble.

Q: Did you cook rice?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Were there any incidents?

A: Nothing special happened.

Q: What is your religion?

A: It is Buddhism.

Q: Is it the Shinshu Sect?

A: Yes, it is.

Q: Did you leave Japan to do business here?

A: Yes, I did.

Q: Were you sent here from a company?

A: No, I was on my own. My relative had a big store in Hawaii hiring 4 or 5 employees. I managed a liquor store. A relative asked me if I would like to quit the liquor business and teach a school, so I did.

Q: Were you a teacher in Japan?

A: No, I became a teacher after I went to Hawaii.

Q: How much schooling did you have in Japan?

A: I went to a high school.

Q: Not many people attended a high schools, didn't they?

A: In those days few people graduated from high schools.

Q: Were you the oldest son?

A: No, I was the youngest.

Q: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

A: I had 5 brothers and sisters.

Q: Didn't your parents object when you told them that you were going overseas?

A: No, they didn't. I put in an application to go overseas without telling my parents, brothers nor my wife. Three days later the passport was issued and surprised my wife. Then I told my parents and brothers that I was going to Hawaii.

Q: How long after you received your passport did you leave Japan?

A: I left Japan about 6 months after I recieved the passport. Until then I worked at the Quartermaster.

Q: Was Hawaii different from Sacramento?

A: I didn't think it was much different as there were many people from the same native village.

Q: Have you ever been excluded?

A: No, not particularly. In those days you could not transfer from Hawaii to America.

Q: Could you come here because you were in business?

A: Yes, I came here to start a business.

Q: When you went to Hawaii in 1912 were there all kinds of people. on board the ship?

A: There were 14 people who had American citizenship. I was the first one to land when the ship arrived. Ones with citizenship landed later.

Q: What was your first impression of America?

A: I thought it was a nice country.

Q: In what way did you think it was a good country?

A: In Hawaii my salary was $14.50 a month. I helped with bookkeeping on the side so I did not have to pay for food. When I came here the wages were good.

Q: About how much was it?

A: A laborer used to earn $1.50 to $1.75 an hour. In Hawaii the wages of laborers were very low in those days. At school I received $24.50 a month.

Q: How many children do you have?

A: We have 5 children. I brought the son who was born in Japan with me. When I went back to Japan to visit my mother I had a baby there. Two children were born in Hawaii, and one was born in America.

Q: Do you know many picture brides?

A: Yes, there were many picture brides, and only a few who came here as married couples like us.

Q: Mr. Okumura where did you learn English?

A: I don't speak English well. I learned it by myself.

Q: How long did you operate the camp in Lodi?

A: Until the war broke out.

Q: Were you living in Lodi when Pearl Harbor was attacked?

A: I was living here and was working in Lodi. When the war broke out the money in the bank was going to be frozen, so we called George home from Berkeley and changed the account in his name. Soon after that we left the camp and went to Chicago.

Q: Didn't you go to camp then?

A: We were in the camp. When we could go out of the camp we went to Colorado and stayed there for 3 to 4 months. Then we went to Chicago where our oldest son who left the camp earlier was managing a boarding house. We stayed in Chicago for about 3 years and made some money before we came back here.

Q: How did you feel when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor?

A: We were scared as we didn't know what would become of us. We went to Walerga and then to camp. People who wanted to go back to Japan went to Tule Lake. Most young people went to Chicago area. As we managed a boarding house in Chicago about 50 to 60 men stayed in our boarding house and I cooked for them. It was so hard that I became ill. WRA send people who were looking for a place to live, so our boarding house was full of young men. The boarders paid the rent in advance, so we used that money to buy food. People of Chicago were very kind to us. They told Japanese not to go back to California where people exclude Japanese. We would not have come back to California if my wife did not become ill because we had paid downpayment on a house in Chicago. She became ill because she worked too hard. We lived in Chicago for about 3 years.

Q: Did you find jobs for the boarders, also?

A: No, just boarding. People worked in shifts. There are about 3 shifts so people come in and out keeping us busy. When people came back at night I told them to warm up their food and eat. I became very tired. My son-in -law is a doctor but he told me to see another doctor, who told me that I was too overworked, so if I took it easy I would become well.

Q: Did the F.B.I. agents come?

A: Yes, they came everyday, even during the night to investigate. I felt sorry for young men who had to go to work in a couple of hours.

Q: Did you go to Camp Amache?

A: Yes, we did.

Q: Did you stay there for about a year?

A: No we did not even stay there for half a year. We left there in about 3 months.

Q: Did you have trouble in your children's education?

A: They went to school in Chicago.

Q: Where did your oldest son go after graduating from Berkeley?

A: He went to Chicago and attended universities there.

Q: Did the F.B.I. investigate George?

A: He requested exemption from draft in Japanese Army, so that is why they investigated him.

Q: Did the F.B.I. know that he requested exemption from draft?

A: Yes, they found it out in the record of the Japanese American Association. I felt sorry for the young men who had to go to work especially those who worked at night when the F.B.I. kept asking questions.

Q: Where were you at the time of Depression?

A: We had a camp in Lodi. Some people who did not have jobs could not pay utility bills, so they asked us to lend them money. We could find work all right. Our son used to work in a cannery when he didn't work in Lodi.

Q: Weren't you questioned about loyalty in the camp?

A: No, we weren't. I was questioned by F.B.I. as I taught school but as I had not done anything wrong they let me go.

Q: Did your sons go into service?

A: Yes, one did. The oldest son did not go, but the younger one did.

Q: Weren't there any Japanese who opposed Nisei going into service?

A: That was in the camp. My son went into service from Chicago. He went back to University after he got out of the service.

Q: What year did you come back here?

A: About 3 years after the war ended.

Q: Then there weren't any trouble when you came back here, weren't there?

A: No, there weren't. We bought this place, and has been living here since.

Q: Didn't you have any trouble when you bought this house?

A: No, I didn't. We could not buy the house in our name, so we bought it in George's name.

Q: What did you do after you came back here?

A: I grew grape by contract and also worked in the cannery.

Q: How long did you continue doing your work?

A: Until I was about 70 years old. I have not been doing anything since,

Q: Did you associate with the white families?

A: No, we didn't.

Q: Japanese experience much hardships, but what do you think was the hardest experience?

A: I did not experience any hardship. I think I had a pretty good life. We had our furnitures stored in Lodi when we evacuated. After we went to Chicago, the government shiped our furnitures to Chicago.

Q: What did you do with your belongings when you evacuated?

A: We stored them at a white boss'es place in Lodi.

Q: Did they all come back when you came home?

A: No, the government sent them to Chicago while we were there.

Q: Many people had their belongings stolen but you were lucky, weren't you?

A: Yes, we were. He was the boss of the company.

Q: What was the hardest experience for you, Mrs. Okumura?

A: That was when I became ill. After we came back here from Chicago I did not do anything so I became well.

Q: You have many grandchildren, don't you?

A: We have 18 grandchildren, and 6 or 7 great grandchildren.

Q: What do you want to teach Sansei and Yonsei?

A: I would like to tell them not to be extravagant but to be frugal.

Q: Do you think Sanseis are doing well?

A: I think they are doing better than Niseis.

Q: What do you think the Isseis had the most difficulties in?

A: Many Isseis had difficulties in earning their livelihood as they could not find jobs.

Q: Why did you go to Chicago from the camp?

A: Our oldest son left the camp earlier and went to Chicago. He asked me to go over there and manage a boarding house, so we did.

Q: You had quite an easy life compared to others, didn't you?

A: Thank goodness.

Project I.D. No.54

NAME: Okumura, Toyosuke DATE OF BIRTH: 1887 PLACE OF BIRTH: Hiroshima
Age: 87 Sex: M Marital Status: M Education: High school

PRE-WAR:
Date of arrival in U.S.: 1912 Age: 25 M.S. M Port of entry: Honolulu
Occupation/s: 1. Grocery store 2. Restaurant 3. Contractor of grape
Place of residence: 1. Hawaii 2. Sacramento 3. Lodi
Religious affiliation: Buddhist church
Community organizations/activities: Teacher of Japanese Language School in Hawaii
Came to U.S. in 1924

EVACUATION:
Name of assembly center: Wallaga
Name of relocation center: Amache, Colorado
Dispensation of property: An American kept it. Names of bank/s:
Jobs held in camp: 1. 2.
Jobs held outside of camp:
Left camp to go to: Chicago

POST-WAR:
Date returned to West Coast: 1948
Address/es: 1. Sacramento 2.
3.
Religious affiliation: Buddhist cgurch
Activities: 1. 2. 3.
If deceased, date, place and age at time of death:

Name of interviewer: Takarabe Date: 2/4/74 Place: Sacramento, Ca.
Translator: unlisted

Q: Where is your birthplace?

A: It is Hiroshima.

Q: When were you born?

A: I was born in February 1887. My wife was born in Feb., 1891.

Q: How old are you now?

A: I am only 87 years old.

Q: What is your name?

A: My name is Toyosuke Okumura.

Q: What about your's, Mrs. Okumura?

A: My name is Hideyo Okumura.

Q: Where were you born Mrs. Okumura?

A: I was born in Miho, Hiroshima.

Q: When did you leave Japan, Mr. Okumura?

A: I left Japan in 1912 and came here.

Q: Did you come to America to work?

A: Of course. I didn't come here to gamble.

Q: Did you come alone?

A: Yes, I came here alone at first.

Q: Did you have friends over here?

A: No, nobody special although there were many people here from my native village. When I came here I didn't have any friends. I went to Hawaii and stayed there for 12 years. Then I came here.

Q: Did you come to America in 1924, then?

A: Yes, I did. It was at the height of exclusion. I was doing business then.

Q: What kind of business were you in?

A: I was in grocery business.

Q: When did you come here Mrs. Okumura?

A: I came here about 4 years after my husband did.

Q: Were you married before you came here?

A: We were married and had a child. I brought him with me.

Q: How was the life in Hawaii?

A: I managed a store at first, Then I worked as a teacher of the Japanese Language School before I came here.

Q: What kind of work did you do after you came here?

A: I could not find a job so I packed fruits.

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Mrs. O.: He hired people and grew grape, also. He did all kinds of work.

Q: What do you remember well about the time you first came here?

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Q: What were the hardest things?

A: I didn't experience any hardships.

Q: Were you ever in trouble?

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A: Yes, it was.

Q: About what time did you get up?

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Mrs. O

Q: Do you know many picture brides?

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A: I don't speak English well. I learned it by myself.

Q: How long did you operate the camp in Lodi?

A: Until the war broke out.

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A: Many Isseis had difficulties in earning their livelihood as they could not find jobs.

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A: Our oldest son left the camp earlier and went to Chicago. He asked me to go over there and manage a boarding house, so we did.

Q: You had quite an easy life compared to others, didn't you?

A: Thank goodness.